

## CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

13 October 1949

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM NO. 235

SUBJECT: Britain's Overseas Military Commitments

Britain's overseas military commitments, some burdensome and some only potentially costly, are of several types:

- (1) Those natural to a modern colonial power, the defense of its dependent territories from external aggression and internal disorder;
- (2) Those set out explicitly in treaties or agreements, involving defense guarantees, the supply of ~~arms~~ *arms* and/or training missions;
- (3) Those implicit in Britain's Commonwealth and general defense policies; and
- (4) Occupational responsibilities.

Within these general types there is overlapping. For example, by treaty the UK is bound to defend Egypt and enjoys the right to maintain troops and bases there; but a commitment to defend the Middle East from external aggression, to maintain a condition of stability there, and to control the Mediterranean-Suez Canal-Red Sea "life-line" is implicit in Britain's Commonwealth and general defense policies. Similar considerations apply to Iraq. As another example, Gibraltar would be defended as a dependent territory, but it would also be defended for reasons implicit in the Commonwealth and defense policies. It is apparent, therefore, that although for convenience and organization British commitments are broken down into categories, many of them fit more than one.

To service these commitments British forces are disposed across the world\* according to British "Estimates of the Situation" and the availability of bases.

\* See Tab A for the disposition of UK forces

Note: This memorandum has not been coordinated with the intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, Army, Navy, and the Air Force.

Document No. 001NO CHANGE in Class. ☐

DECLASSIFIED

Class. CHANGED TO: TS S (C)

DDA Memo, 4 Apr 77

Auth: DDA REG. 77/1763

Date: 12/11/79 By: ~~SECRET~~

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The Dependent Territories

Britain's defense commitments include all the parts of the widespread dependent Empire. The majority of these parts, however, require no positive defense efforts or only token forces (for example, the colonies in the Western Hemisphere, the Pacific Islands, Aden).

Some British dependencies, though more or less stable and not in jeopardy from aggression, are strategically situated; they must be kept prepared for defense and maintained as air, naval, and/or army bases. In some cases their local economies must be supported by annual grants-in-aid (subsidies). Included in this group are Gibraltar, Malta, Cyprus, and Singapore; and Kenya as the site of a large supply depot. The British military investment in each is heavy. They are all important militarily, though for some the degree may fluctuate in relationship to the availability to British forces of Egypt and Cyrenaica (see below).

Two dependencies at present require relatively large commitments. Some 37,500 army troops (including colonial troops) are disposed in Malaya on active operations, together with supporting air and naval forces, to put down insurrection. Some 16,000 troops, with supporting air and naval elements, are disposed at Hong Kong to cope with the Chinese Communist threat to that colony; this force is continuing to be increased.

Treaties and Agreements

Britain's treaty obligations (and advantages) are numerous. Some are costly; some only potentially so. Some are overlapping.

(1) The North Atlantic Treaty (1949)

By the terms of this pact the UK is committed militarily according to the following terms:

Article V The parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them, in exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defense recognized by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, will assist the party or parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area. Any such armed attack and all measures taken as a result thereof shall immediately be reported to the Security Council. Such measures shall be terminated

when the Security Council has taken the measures necessary to restore and maintain international peace and security.

The explication of Britain's obligations under the NAT is in its initial stages. It may be notable, however, that of the five regional planning groups set up, the UK is a full and permanent member of four --- more than any other state. (The US is a permanent member of only two of them at present, though it is associated with each of the other three in a non-member role.)

In this connection, though antedating the NAT organization, the UK has maintained two large military staffs in the US apart from the service attaches. One is known as the Joint Services Mission, reporting to the Ministry of Supply, and the other supports the British element of the Combined Chiefs of Staff.

(2) Five-Power Treaty of Western Union (Brussels Treaty) (1948)

Britain is committed militarily according to the following terms:

Article IV If any of the high contracting parties should be the object of an armed attack in Europe, the other high contracting parties will, in accordance with the provisions of Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, afford the party so attacked all the military and other aid and assistance in their power.

Under the terms of the Treaty the UK has committed itself to a centralized supreme command, to an integrated staff organization, to the manning of a defense line east of France and the Benelux countries, to increased production of military equipment, and to other cooperative measures involving equipment, training, and the assumption of the major share of administrative costs of the organization in London and Fontainebleau.

(3) The Anglo-French Treaty of Dunkirk (1947)

This pact commits the UK and France to take such action as necessary to put an end to any threat to the security of either of them "arising from the adoption by Germany of a policy of aggression or from action by Germany to facilitate such a policy".

(4) Anglo-Portuguese Treaties

There are eight treaties and a Secret Declaration covering a period from 1373 to 1899, the most important being:

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(a) Treaty of 1661 which binds His Majesty to "take the interest of Portugal and all its dominions to heart, defending the same with his utmost power by sea and land, even as England itself", and further to send troops for the purpose and ships also.

Though an annexed Secret Article binds His Majesty to "defend and protect all conquests or colonies belonging to the Crown of Portugal against all his enemies, as well future as present", it is expected that the UK will refuse to defend Portuguese Macao in the event of attack on the latter by the Chinese Communists.

(b) Secret Declaration of 1899 in which both parties confirm the Secret Article of 1661.

(5) The Anglo-Jordan Treaty (1948)

In substance this treaty commits the two parties to the following:

(a) Should either party be engaged in war, the other party will come to its aid. In the event of imminent menace of hostilities the parties will immediately concert together on the necessary measures of defense.

(b) In event of either party being engaged in war or menaced by hostilities, each will invite the other to bring to his territory, or territory controlled by him, all necessary force of arms.

(c) The King of Jordan will safeguard, maintain and develop airfields, roads, ports, etc. in and across Jordan as may be required, and will call upon the British for assistance as may be required.

(d) The King of Jordan invites the British to maintain units of the Royal Air Force at Amman and Mafrak airfields. The King of Jordan will provide all necessary facilities.

(e) Britain offers appropriate facilities in the UK for training the armed forces of Jordan. Britain will make available operational units to engage in joint training operations. Britain will provide on request any British service personnel whose services are required to insure military efficiency of Jordanian forces. Britain will afford military instruction to Jordanian officers and provide arms, ammunition, equipment, aircraft, etc.

(f) As long as the treaty is in force Britain will, in accordance with arrangements agreed upon, annually afford financial assistance to Jordan to enable it to carry out obligations undertaken.

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(Note: For fiscal year 49-50 this financial assistance amounts to £3.5 million)

(6) The Anglo-Egyptian Treaty (1936)

In substance this treaty commits the two parties to the following:

(a) Should either party become engaged in war, the other will immediately come to his aid in the capacity of an ally.

(b) The aid of the King of Egypt, in event of imminent menace of war or apprehended international emergency, will consist in furnishing the UK on Egyptian territory all facilities and assistance in his power, including use of ports, aerodromes, and means of communication.

(c) Until such time as parties agree that Egyptian Army is in position to protect Suez Canal, King of Egypt authorizes UK to station forces in specified zones around Canal.

(d) Without prejudice to (a) above, UK troops in Canal Zone may not exceed 10,000 land forces and 400 pilots together with necessary ancillary personnel for administrative and technical duties. These numbers do not include civilian personnel.

(e) Egyptians will provide when necessary reasonable means of communication and access to and from localities where British forces are situated and will also accord facilities at Port Said and Suez for landing and storage of materials and supplies for British forces, including maintenance of small detachment of British forces in those ports to handle and guard this material and these supplies in transit.

Though Egypt has denounced this Treaty, the UK considers it still in effect and remains hopeful that a new Treaty containing terms reasonably satisfactory to British requirements will eventually be concluded when Egypt's postwar xenophobia has died down. It is notable in this connection that Egypt is no longer pressing the UK to remove or reduce its forces in Egypt even though their present strength there is about three times that specified in the old Treaty as the upper limit. An RAF training mission continues to be active with the Royal Egyptian Air Force.

(7) The Anglo-Iraqi Treaty (1932)

In substance this treaty commits the two parties to the following:

(a) Should either of the parties become engaged in war, the other party will immediately come to its aid in the capacity of an

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ally. In event of imminent menace of war the parties will immediately concert together regarding necessary measures of defense.

(b) The King of Iraq will give the UK two air bases at or in the vicinity of Basra (Shaiba) and to the west of the Euphrates (Habbaniya). The King of Iraq authorizes the UK to maintain forces on Iraq territory at those points. The strength of these forces shall be determined by the UK from time to time after consultation with the King of Iraq.

(c) The UK undertakes to grant, whenever may be required by the King of Iraq, all possible facilities in the following matters, cost of which will be met by the King of Iraq:

- i), naval, military and aeronautical instruction to Iraqi officers in the UK
- ii) provision of arms, ammunition, equipment, ships and aeroplanes of latest available pattern for forces of Iraq
- iii) provision of British naval, military and air force officers to serve in advisory capacity to the forces of Iraq

(8) The Treaty of Mutual Assistance between Britain, France and Turkey (1939)

In substance the provisions of this treaty are as follows:

(a) In the event of Turkey being involved in hostilities with a European power because of aggression of that power against Turkey, Britain and France will cooperate effectively with Turkey and will lend her all aid and assistance in their power.

(b) In the event of an act of aggression by a European power leading to war in the Mediterranean area in which France and the UK are involved, Turkey will cooperate effectively with France and the UK and will lend them all aid and assistance in her power. In the event of an act of aggression in the Mediterranean in which Turkey is involved, France and the UK will collaborate effectively with Turkey.

(c) In the event of France and the UK being involved in hostilities with a European power in consequence of aggression committed by that power against those powers in an area other than the Mediterranean, the parties will immediately consult together. Nevertheless, it is agreed that in such eventuality Turkey will observe at least a benevolent neutrality toward France and the UK.

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(d) In the event of i) aggression by a European power against another European state whose government one of the parties had, with the approval of that state, undertaken to assist in maintaining independence or neutrality against such aggression; or ii) aggression by a European power which, while directed against another European state, constituted in the opinion of one of the governments of the parties a menace to its own security, the parties will immediately consult together with a view to such common action as might be considered effective.

(9) The Anglo-Greek Agreement (1944)

The presence of British troops in Greece was first formalized by the above agreement. This invitation to the British forces to continue in Greece has been reaffirmed by succeeding Greek Governments. The UK maintains a brigade of about 3,000 troops based in Greece. In addition, the British have three service missions, military, air and naval, engaged in training and re-equipping the Greek armed forces. (The British also maintain a Police and Prisons Mission for training purposes). Since the American Military Aid to Greece mission began to operate in 1947, the US and UK missions have worked jointly and closely.

(10) The Anglo-Burmese Defense Agreement (1947)

This agreement provides:

(a) for the evacuation of all British troops from Burma immediately after Burma becomes independent (Jan 1948);

(b) for the transfer to Burma of airfields, naval vessels, fixed Army and RAF establishments and initial equipment for the Burmese Army;

(c) for the establishment of a Naval, Military and Air Force Mission for instructional and advisory purposes with the condition that the government of Burma will not accept such a mission from any government outside of the British Commonwealth;

(d) for British contribution of financial and technical assistance in maintaining specified airfields;

(e) for the extending of all reasonable British facilities for purchase by the government of Burma of war material;

(f) for ships of either Navy to have the right of entry into ports of the other party upon direct notification between their respective naval authorities on the spot;

(g) for military aircraft of either party to have the right, upon customary peace-time direct notification between the respective air authorities, to fly over the territories of the other, and to enjoy

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staging facilities at airfields agreed upon.

(h) for the government of Burma to afford all reasonable assistance including facilities of access and entry into Burma by air, land and sea, to British forces bringing help and support to Burma by agreement with the government of Burma or to any part of the Commonwealth by agreement with the government of Burma and with the government of that part of the Commonwealth;

(i) for the opening of fresh negotiations by either party with the other on any matter within the defense sphere, such negotiations, except by agreement, not to affect obligations under this agreement.

(11) The Anglo-Ethiopian Agreement (1944)

This agreement, although supposed to expire in 1946, has been extended indefinitely pending the disposition of the Italian colonies. Article VI provides for the establishment of a British Military Mission in Ethiopia to reorganize and train the Ethiopian Army.

(12) Anglo-Siamese Military Relations

There is no formal military agreement between Siam and the UK. Britain enjoys, however, especially close relations with Siam and provides special facilities to the Siamese such as the training of Siamese officers in the UK and Malaya, and the provision of arms and supplies. The British Military Attache in Bangkok serves as military adviser to the Siamese Army. Local agreements have been concluded between Siamese and Malayan authorities permitting the passage of border patrols over the national boundary and providing for exchange of information in efforts to deal with disorders in the Malaya-Siam border area.

(13) Anglo-Saudi Arabian Military Relations

The UK maintains a Military Training Mission in Saudi Arabia. In addition it provides a Civil Air Training Mission, and the RAF has shown interest in surveying the area for airfield sites.

Commonwealth and General Defense Policies

a. Commonwealth Policies

Britain's Commonwealth and general defense policies contain implied military commitments not expressed in contractual or treaty relations

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(except in the case of Ceylon\*).

So far as the Commonwealth is concerned, it may be assumed that the UK would participate in the defense of any of the Dominions made the object of aggression by a non-Commonwealth power. Though varying in degree, Dominion by Dominion, the UK's military and strategic relations with the other Commonwealth nations are close. There is interchange of certain intelligence, and in some cases a division of intelligence work. The UK is the source of much of the others' equipment. Since the war, the UK has encouraged the Dominions to enlarge their armed services and assume greater defense responsibilities. The UK provides technical and general training facilities and advisory services. Two of Britain's major naval bases, Trincomalee (Ceylon) and Simonstown (South Africa) are leased from the Dominions and maintained by the Royal Navy. Technical control of the Ceylonese forces is practically in British hands. British officers serve in and advise the Indian and the Pakistan forces on contract. New Zealand looks to the UK for technical military guidance. Canada and Australia are on the most intimate military terms with the UK forces, and the UK is carrying out joint research and development projects with each. For political reasons, military relations with South Africa are currently less cordial.

b. General Defense Policies

Britain's over-all defense policies also contain implied military commitments, based on the mission of the armed forces: i.e., to insure the security of the UK, the dependent empire, and British interests overseas; and to take the leading part in insuring the security of imperial communications. The Middle East, in British thinking, falls within these terms. As the locus of gigantic British investments, the source of essential oil supplies, a center of imperial communications, and the sole Eurasian-African land bridge, the Middle East would be defended at any cost by the British against aggression by an external power. (The British have encouraged US participation in Middle East defense planning). Britain's strategic planners

- \* The Anglo-Ceylonese Defense Agreement (1947) provides that (1) The two governments will give each other such military assistance for the security of their territories, for defense against external aggression, and for the protection of essential communications as it may be in their mutual interest to provide; (2) The UK may base such naval and air forces, and maintain such land forces in Ceylon as may be required for these purposes and as may be mutually agreed; (3) The Government of Ceylon will grant the UK all the necessary facilities.... These....will include the use of naval and air bases and ports and military establishments and the use of telecommunications facilities; (4) The UK will aid in training and development of Ceylonese armed forces; (5) joint administrative machinery will be established to implement this cooperation and to coordinate the defense requirements.

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subordinate the area only to the home defense zone; they view a Soviet menace to the Middle East as a threat to Britain's national security as dangerous as any similar threat to Western Europe; they consider that the loss of the Middle East would endanger the independence of Pakistan, India, Ceylon and Southeast Asia and would probably permanently affect the world balance-of-power between the USSR and the West. The British would, therefore, react vigorously to any threat to this area, regardless of whether a treaty relationship existed requiring action.

Also embedded in Britain's defense policies is the giving of military aid and advice to nations expected to be allies in event of war. It follows from this that the UK has special relations, not always reflected in explicit treaties or general agreements, with the numerous countries which use British Tables of Organization and equipment. Special technical missions to these countries have been fairly frequent, and their specialists attend military schools in the UK. Apart from the Commonwealth, several countries of Western Europe and Scandinavia were the beneficiaries after the war of surplus British equipment, including ships, aircraft, and army supplies. All the countries of the Middle East periodically seek military favors from the UK and minor potentates have for long received politico-military subventions. Siam and Burma are likewise applicants for military favors. Argentina's purchase of British aircraft led to the establishment in Argentina of a technical advisory mission, reportedly on a two-year contract.

#### Occupational Responsibilities

British forces have occupational missions in Germany, Austria, Trieste, and the Italian colonies. More than 20% of the British Army forces are so committed.

##### (1) Germany

The UK occupies and administers an area of 33,700 square miles in northwest Germany in accordance with the agreement reached by the European Advisory Commission (a body set up at the Moscow Conference of 1943 and including representatives of the US, the USSR, the UK, and France) and approved by the four governments in 1945. No limit was set on the numbers of troops, and though the later Potsdam agreement set out the main purposes of the occupation of Germany, it made no provision for its termination.

##### (2) Austria

The UK occupies and administers the Southern zone of Austria in accordance with the agreement reached by the European Advisory Commission and approved by the four governments in 1945. No limit was set on the numbers of troops. The termination of the occupation depends on the terms of the Austrian Peace Treaty. Though still under

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negotiation, one agreed article specifies the withdrawal of troops within 90 days after ratification by the occupation governments.

(3) Trieste

The Italian Peace Treaty called for a short-term military occupation of the Free Territory of Trieste until the appointment of a governor under the UN Security Council. The treaty provides that troops in the FTT shall not exceed 5,000 each for the UK, US and Yugoslavia. When a governor is appointed, these troops shall be at his disposal for a period of 90 days after his assumption of office, after which they will cease to be at his disposal and will be withdrawn within a further period of 45 days, unless the governor advises the Security Council that some or all of the troops should not be withdrawn, in which case the troops required may remain until not later than 45 days after Governor has advised the Security Council that the troops no longer needed for internal security.

(4) The ex-Italian Colonies

The UK occupies and administers the ex-Italian colonies--Libya, Eritrea, and Italian Somaliland--by the terms of the Italian Peace Treaty, pending their final disposal. Their disposal rests with the UN General Assembly; the British will retain their responsibilities until the General Assembly reaches a decision.

The civil responsibilities have been a financial burden to the British. They have been concerned for some time to relinquish their responsibilities in respect of Somaliland, Eritrea, and the provinces of Libya excepting Cyrenaica. Cyrenaica plays a part in the pattern of Britain's strategic planning for Middle East defense. The British expect to conclude a satisfactory defense Treaty with its ruler, when Cyrenaica becomes independent and to maintain permanent bases there. Meanwhile, they have an understanding with the Emir, and may already have begun rather substantial constructional work.

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## TAB A

British Army and British Colonials: Estimated Disposition as of 1 October

<u>Area</u>	<u>UK Troops</u>	<u>Colonials*</u>
United Kingdom	224,000	300
Germany	57,000	-
Austria	6,300	-
Trieste	4,300	-
Gibraltar	3,300	-
Malta	1,400	1,500
Greece	4,700	-
Cyprus	1,900	300
Libya	14,000	3,000
Egypt	27,000	8,500
Sudan and Eritrea	2,100	-
East Africa	7,500	25,000
West Africa	1,700	14,600
Aden	100	-
Jordan	1,500	-
Malaya	17,500	20,000
Ceylon	500	-
Hong Kong	14,000	2,100
Caribbean	950	700
India	270	-
Pakistan	470	-
Miscellaneous	4,510	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>395,000</b>	<b>76,000</b>

\* As of 1 September

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The Royal Navy: Disposition As Reported On 1 September

The British fleet is currently composed of 5 battleships, 6 aircraft-carriers, 6 light aircraft-carriers, 2 heavy cruisers, 24 light cruisers, 115 destroyers, 63 submarines, and 172 escorts. Of these the following are maintained in operating condition:

Home Waters	5 battleships 2 aircraft-carriers 2 light aircraft-carriers 3 light cruisers 31 destroyers 22 submarines 16 escorts
Mediterranean	4 light cruisers 15 destroyers 7 submarines 8 escorts
South Atlantic	1 light cruiser 2 escorts
North Atlantic and West Indies	1 light cruiser 1 submarine 2 escorts
East Indies	2 light cruisers 3 escorts
Pacific	2 light aircraft-carriers 1 heavy cruiser 2 light cruisers 5 escorts 4 destroyers

A few destroyers and escorts are held in reserve on overseas stations; otherwise the bulk of the non-operational ships are based on UK ports.

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The Royal Air Force: Disposition As Reported On 1 October 1949

Home Based*	Medium Bomber Squadrons	22	
	Light Bomber Squadrons	2	
	Day Fighter Squadrons	18	
	Night Fighter Squadrons	6	
	General Reconnaissance Squadrons	5	
	Photo Reconnaissance Squadrons	4	
	Transport Squadrons	15	
	Meteorological Squadrons		(1-Northern Ireland) (1-Gibraltar)
Germany	Fighter Squadrons	5	
	Fighter/Photo Recce Squadrons	1	
	*Light Bomber Squadrons	4	
Middle East Air Force			
	Fighter Squadrons**	5	Egypt
	Fighter Squadrons	1	Cyprus
	Fighter Squadrons	1	Malta
	*Light Bomber Squadrons	1	Aden
	*Light Bomber Squadrons	1	Iraq
	*General Recce Squadrons	2	Malta
	*Photo Recce Squadrons	1	Egypt
	*Transport Squadrons	5	Egypt
Far East Air Force			
	Fighter Squadrons	4	Hong Kong
	Fighter Squadrons	1	Malaya
	*Light Bomber Squadrons	1	Malaya
	*General Recce Squadrons	1	Ceylon
	*General Recce Squadrons	1	Hong Kong
	*General Recce Squadrons	1	Malaya
	*Photo Recce Squadron	1	Malaya
	*Transport Squadrons	3	Malaya

## Sub total of tactical units in the UK

	Medium Bomber	Light Bomber	Fighter	Recon-naissance	Transport	Gladi-son	Total
Tactical Units	18	6	24	11	15	2 flts	74
Aircraft in tactical units	120	40	192	95	120	10	577

\* Half strength (all home based units are maintained at half strength)

\*\* One squadron is half strength

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## Sub total of tactical units outside UK

	Medium Bomber	Light Bomber	Fighter	Recon- naissance	Trans- port	Liaison	Total
Tactical Units	-	7	14½	7½ flt	8	8flts	37+9flts
Aircraft in tactical units	-	56	216	59	64	40	435

Royal Naval Aviation: Disposition As Reported on 1 October 1949

Home Based	Fighter Squadrons	4
	Attack Squadrons	4
Mediterranean	Fighter Squadrons	1 Malta
	Attack Squadrons	1 Malta
Pacific	Fighter Squadrons	1 Hong Kong
	Attack Squadrons	1 Hong Kong

## Royal Naval Aircraft Strength and Types

	Attack	Fighter	Recon- naissance	Liaison	Train- ing	Misc	Total
Number in tactical units	72	76	-	-	-	-	148
Total number of aircraft	838	788	81	24	519	65	2,315

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